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A survey of periodicals and other public sources of military intelligence on the Soviet Union.

OPEN SOURCES ON SOVIET MILITARY AFFAIRS

Davis W. Moore, Jr.

Open sources useful in the production of military intelligence on the Soviet Union are many and varied. They are available in great quantity within the intelligence community and to a smaller extent in the academic world. The Library of Congress, the Army Library, and the Navy Department all have good collections of Soviet publications on military affairs. In the academic world there are some 20 research establishments having more than ten thousand and another 40 or more having between one and ten thousand Russian titles each. More than 35 non-government libraries regularly receive over one hundred Russian periodicals each, and 13 subscribe to ten or more Russian newspapers.¹ If no more than one-tenth of these publications contain information on military affairs they constitute an abundant resource. An exceptionally good collection of Soviet military publications is in the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

The value of such material is less easy to establish than its abundance. For current intelligence, open sources are used only rarely, one reason for this being that there is some lag in the receipt of Soviet publications here. They can, however, be quite useful in supplying information on military doctrine, order of battle, and specific weapons. They can be and are used in the production of basic and estimative military intelligence, and they contribute data on the development of weapons systems. In aggregate, open sources probably furnish the greater part of all information used in the production of military intelligence on the Soviet Union, although the figure would not be so high as ninety per cent.

¹ Melville J. Ruggles and Vaclav Mostecky, *Russian and East European Publications in the Libraries of the United States*, pp. 299-300, 306-307, 310, and 344.

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Open Military Sources

The principal types of open sources dealing at least in part with Soviet military affairs are discussed below with respect to their availability in the United States and their value relative to one another.

Soviet Military Regulations and Manuals

These are concerned for the most part with standard methods of military operation common to all armed forces, but they do occasionally furnish insight into Soviet doctrinal concepts and administrative procedures that differ from those of the West. Their chief value lies in the fact that the issuance of a new regulation or manual usually reflects a change in military thinking. They are also useful lexicographically, to establish precise meanings and connotations in Soviet military terminology.

Although the circulation of official military regulations and manuals in the Soviet Union is generally not restricted, they require special effort to procure because they are issued in very limited quantities. There are therefore likely to be only a few copies of any particular regulation available in the intelligence community and probably none at all in non-government repositories. If a regulation is in especial demand it is translated—usually by the Department of the Army—and reproduced for distribution to all intelligence agencies.

Soviet Books and Pamphlets

These include anything from a specialized pamphlet on street fighting to a 100-column doctrinal treatise on "war" in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*. The Soviets are prolific producers of publications on military—or rather politico-military—affairs, and there are many Russian works on all manner of subjects from national strategy and objectives to defense budgetary problems and night combat. Raymond L. Garthoff's *Soviet Military Doctrine* includes a bibliography of about 350 of the most valuable titles up to 1953,² and in 1959 The Department of the Army published a bibliography entitled *Soviet Military Power* containing 1,300 selected references (to periodicals as well as books), at least one-third of them in Russian.³

² Pp. 514-537.

³ 186 p.

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It should not be assumed that the value of these publications is commensurate with their quantity. In the first place, many are merely translations of Western military works, and while these may be of passing interest in showing the pains the Soviets take to interpret Western concepts in Marxist terms, they throw little light on proper Soviet concepts. In the second place, Soviet military works are filled with political propaganda; by far the greater part of a typical Soviet military publication is concerned with the application of ideological tenets to military concepts. It has been estimated that only about ten per cent of the Soviet military literature is devoted to purely military matters.

An exception which has created something of a stir in the intelligence community is the recently published *Voennaya Strategiya* (*Military Strategy*), a collection of essays edited by the former First Deputy Minister of Defense, Marshal V. D. Sokolovskiy. This is apparently the closest the Soviets have come to publishing a complete and up-to-date analysis of strategic and tactical concepts applied in the practices of their own and the U.S. armed forces. The Air Force was the first to translate the book into English, but the demand for copies soon exceeded the supply, and last spring three editions were published commercially.

Soviet Periodicals

Soviet newspapers and magazines, whether aimed primarily at a military or a civilian audience, probably yield more military information per unit of time spent on them than any other open sources. The two main non-military sources are the central party and government organs *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*. Although they carry relatively little purely military material, they are valuable for two kinds of information. The first is official party and government pronouncements on military matters, which, if they are of major import, appear first in the central press. The second is the reported order of precedence of individuals at official functions, which provides an indication of the current status of different leaders, countries, and policies in Kremlin councils.

Another non-military daily which is often a good source of military information is *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, the newspaper of the Young Communist League. It often carries fea-

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tures not found in either *Pravda* or *Izvestiya* such as reports of trips through Soviet military installations or articles, sometimes complete with pictures, on newly developed weapons.

Although often not regularly available, the Soviet provincial press occasionally contributes some choice bit of information. Sometimes items censored out of the central press will, through bureaucratic inefficiency, appear in one of the republic newspapers. A good example of this occurred last fall: while the central press published only unidentifiably distant side-on pictures of the dignitaries attending the November 7 anniversary parade, the Byelorussian paper carried a good full-face photo of the reviewing stand which revealed the whole order of protocol.

By far the most useful Soviet military publication regularly available in the United States is *Krasnaya Zvezda* (*Red Star*), issued daily by the Chief Political Administration of the Ministry of Defense.⁴ It is received here by air the day after publication and examined promptly. It contains all types of intelligence information, from low-level order of battle up to politico-military matters of the greatest significance. Like all Soviet newspapers, it is quite small by American standards, often not more than four pages, and its content is considered the more important for this tight selection. Even its propaganda commentaries are carefully analyzed to determine in what directions the Soviet authorities are trying to shape the thoughts of their military personnel.

Krasnaya Zvezda was formerly the organ of the Soviet Army, while the Chief Political Administration of the Soviet Navy published a similar daily entitled *Sovetskiy Flot* (*Soviet Fleet*). It was in about mid-1960 that the naval paper was discontinued and *Krasnaya Zvezda*, transferred to the Ministry of Defense, became the daily newspaper for all the Soviet armed forces. It still devotes more attention to the ground forces than to other branches.

Voennaya Mysl' (*Military Thought*), a monthly journal put out by the Historical Division of the General Staff of the

⁴For a discussion of the Soviet military periodicals see Garthoff, *op. cit.*, pp. 508-509, and the same author's *Soviet Strategy in the Nuclear Age*, pp. 254-258.

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Soviet Army, is the USSR's most important military publication. It contains articles written by high-ranking officers on subjects of the greatest doctrinal and strategic import. It bears a classification comparable to our Official Use Only—"For Generals, Admirals, and Officers of the Soviet Army and Navy Only"—and usually circulates no lower than the field-grade officer level. Copies therefore have to be procured clandestinely, and it can not be regarded as an open source. Articles in *Voennaya Mysl'* accepted as doctrine by policy makers, however, usually appear eventually in other military publications.

The Soviet Navy has its own theoretical monthly publication, *Morskoy Sbornik* (Naval Journal), which is also restricted and equally difficult to acquire.

Until recently each service branch, or its chief administration, published a monthly journal devoted mainly to tactical matters of interest to personnel of the branch. These were received in the United States more or less regularly. Now some of these journals have been discontinued and replaced by the publication *Voenniy Vestnik* (Military Herald), previously the journal of the ground forces. Although this now serves the armored, artillery, and ordnance branches as well, its chief emphasis—and hence its main interest to military analysts—continues to be on subjects of tactical relevance to the ground forces. Other branches still publish their own monthly journals, and these, when available, continue to be excellent sources of information on tactical doctrine and order of battle.

Recently two new monthly military publications have appeared, one named *Starshina-Serzhant* (Warrant Officer and Sergeant) after its intended NCO audience and the other entitled *Sovetskiy Voin* (Soviet Warrior), aimed at enlisted men in general. These mass-audience magazines contain no doctrinal information of any kind, but they occasionally furnish some useful order-of-battle information or a photograph of some new piece of equipment.

In the field of paramilitary publications, the Soviet Voluntary Society for Aid to the Army, Aviation and the Fleet (DOSAAF) publishes the semi-weekly paper *Sovetskiy Patriot*. This has recently become an extremely valuable source on the civil defense and paramilitary instruction given to boys and

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girls in the USSR. Since many retired military personnel participate in these training activities, it also serves as a source of OB information. DOSAAF publishes in addition several military journals, the most valuable of which, because it contains articles written by Soviet military leaders, is *Voenniye Znaniya (Military Knowledge)*.

These publications are of course more valuable to an analyst who has a reading knowledge of Russian than to one who does not. Selections from them, however, are made available in translation by CIA's Foreign Documents Division, and further translations can be obtained on request. Another useful source is *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, edited by Leo Grulow under the direction of the Joint Committee on Slavic Studies of Columbia University. This offers weekly a translation of important current articles, and although oriented mostly toward political developments, it does contain occasional items of military import. It should be used to supplement the FDD publications, which do not as a rule include items that have already appeared in the *Current Digest*.

Less information on Soviet military matters comes from the Satellite press, naturally, than from the Soviet. The Soviet forces in the Satellites are less active publicly and more segregated from the populace than they are at home, and the Satellite press is in any case reluctant to publish information of a military nature until it has appeared in a Soviet publication. If an analyst regularly follows the press of a Satellite country, however, he will occasionally find an item of OB interest or an "exclusive" report dealing with some activity of the Soviet military there.

Soviet Broadcasts and Press Transmissions

Although radio broadcasts cannot be regarded as one of the major open sources of military information on the Soviet Union, they can nevertheless be useful from time to time. Their great advantage is in being made available to Western analysts much more quickly than newspaper or journal articles. In matters of urgency the translated text of a broadcast Soviet statement can be in an analyst's hands within an hour of broadcast time, whereas he will not receive a published article until at least twenty-four hours after publication, and should he want a translation of it he will have to wait even

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longer. In routine matters the difference is that between a day or two and several weeks.

Texts of Soviet broadcasts published daily by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service are widely distributed throughout the intelligence community and to some public institutions, but they are of limited use in the production of military intelligence because the Soviets broadcast far less military information than they print. Moreover, the FBIS analytic work is therefore oriented chiefly to political rather than military subjects. On the other hand, much of this political broadcasting can have military significance, and it is catalogued in FBIS in such a way as to be of great use to the military analyst, with separate files, for example, of Soviet leaders' pronouncements on strategy, capabilities, and war themes and Soviet threats of counteraction.

Western Sources

Into this category fall such diverse informants as Soviet defectors, Russian exile groups active in the West, former German military personnel who have had contact with the Red Army, and Western experts on military affairs. Some of these can be regarded as primary sources of information and others only as useful to help interpret data from primary sources.

Soviet defectors can be a copious source of information: most of them have had at least some experiences with the Soviet military and are eager to tell what they know. Their public statements and writings, while they may be sensationalized, affected by whatever bias led to the defection, and limited by the particular situations the authors had experienced, can be valuable confirmatory sources and may contain new information for which confirmation can be sought elsewhere.

The publications of Russian exile groups can often provide assistance to the Soviet military affairs analyst, not so much as a source of raw information but as a help in interpreting open-source data available to exiles and analysts alike. One such group, the Institute for the Study of the USSR, headquartered in Munich and headed by Nikolay Galay, puts out a monthly *Bulletin* which often contains excellent articles on Soviet military affairs. This and other exile publications, such as the New York newspaper *Novoe Russkoe Slovo* (*New Russian*

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Word), are generally available throughout the intelligence and academic communities.

There are numerous German open sources of military information on the Soviet Union. Some are accounts by German prisoners of war returned from imprisonment in the U.S.S.R. Useful information can be derived from these if they are treated with the same caution as refugee and defector reports. Others are formal, rigorous German analyses of Soviet military doctrine and capabilities by wartime generals on the eastern front or in the general staff. These tend to manifest a national bias and doctrinaire approach similar to that in the corresponding products of Soviet generals, but the analyst, by making allowance for this, can derive some valuable analytical material from them.

The last group of sources in this category consists of Western authorities on Soviet military affairs. Prominent within this group are Raymond L. Garthoff, a former researcher for the Rand Corporation who has produced three excellent books on Soviet military theory and operating techniques, Herbert S. Dinerstein, the author of *War and the Soviet Union*, B. H. Liddell Hart, the noted British military authority, and Hanson W. Baldwin, the *New York Times* military specialist. Although these men rarely have access to any information not available to the intelligence analyst, they use many of the same sources he does and consequently can make contributions to the analyst's interpretation of the raw information.

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